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IS SOME OF THE RUGGEDEST, LEAST HOSPITABLE TERRITORY IN THE WORLD--HIGH, MOUNTAINOUS AND COLD. MUCH OF WAKHAN'S SPARE POPULATION--KIRGHIZ TRIBESMEN LOYAL TO RAHMAN GUL KHAN--LEFT FOR PAKISTAN IN LATE 1978, APPARENTLY LEAVING FEW INHABITANTS FOR CHINESE (OR OTHER) AGENTS TO OPERATE AMONG.

3. (C) THERE IS PERHAPS SLIGHT POSSIBILITY THAT WAKHAN INSURGENTS IN WESTERN BADAQSHAN PROVINCE. I DISCUSSED MATTER HERE EARLIER THIS MONTH. ACCORDING TO HIM, ANY SUPPLIES WOULD HAVE TO BE TRANSPORTED ON YAKS OR BACTRAIN CAMELS DURING SUMMER ONLY THROUGH EASTERN WAKHAN. HOWEVER, THAT NEARBY RUSSIAN MILITARY POSTS WOULD PROBABLY INTERDICT SUCH TRAFFIC. A MOTORABLE (PRESUMABLY NOT IN WINTER) ROAD DOES EXIST IN WESTERN WAKHAN, FROM ISHKASHIM TO DALA PANJA, BUT ACCORDING TO LOUIS DUPREE, IT LIES DIRECTLY UNDER VIEW OF RUSSIAN WATCH-TOWERS ON OPPOSITE BANK OF RIVER. THUS, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT CORRIDOR COULD BECOME ARMS TRAFFICKING ROUTE:

4. (C) GUNS TO CHITRAL: SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY ARMS SUPPLY ROUTE FROM CHINESE TURKISTAN WOULD BE THROUGH PAKISTAN'S NORTHERN AREAS, AS WAS ALLEGED IN INDIAN PRESS ACCOUNT. ROUTE WOULD BE FROM KASHGAR VIA NEW KARAKORUM HIGHWAY TO GILGIT, THEN ON JEEP TRACK OVER SHANDUR PASS TO CHITRAL. FROM CHITRAL, ARMS COULD FLOW TO AFGHANISTAN'S KUNAR TO BADAQSHAN PROVINCES. (INDIAN PRESS ACCOUNT, HOWEVER, HAS THINGS A BIT SCRAMBLED BY MENTIONING BABUSOR PASS, WHICH LEADS FROM GILGIT SOUTH TO KAGAN VALLEY AND ULTIMATELY TO PUNJAB--A MOST UNLIKELY ROUTE).

5. (C) SHANDUR ROUTE TO CHITRAL COULD STAND MODEST AMOUNT OF GUN RUNNING BY JEEP DURING RIGHT SEASON. PRESENTLY, HOWEVER, SNOWS BLOCK SHANDUR (12,000 FT) AND WILL UNTIL MAY OR JUNE, SO
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I AM CERTAIN CHINESE ARE NOT MOVING WEAPONS ON ROUTE. THEY CERTAINLY HAD NOT BEEN LAST JULY WHEN I TOOK TWO DAY JEEP TRIP ON PORTION OF IT--MASTUJ, CHITRAL TO GILGIT. THEN, WINE WAS ONLY JEEP FOR WEEK OR MORE TO PLY VERY BAD ROAD ON WHICH WE HAD TO BUILD A BRIDGE TO PROCEED.

6. (C) FURTHER

WHERE

ARRIVAL OF A SINGLE JEEP IS CAUSE FOR COMMENT. I OF MY INTEREST IN SUBJECTS OF THIS SORT. TO DATE, THOUGH, HE HAS

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REPORTED NOTHING ABOUT ARMS TRAFFICKING. THAT IS PROOF ENOUGH FOR ME THAT ROUTE HAS NOT BECOME ANOTHER HO CHI MINH TRAIL.

7. (C) CHINESE IN WESTERN BADAQSHAN: SINCE LATE 1978, I HAVE HEARD RUMORS OF CHINESE PRESENCE IN WESTERN BADAQSHAN PROVINCE. I ASSUME THAT INDIAN (AND CURRENT WESTERN ONES) PRESS ACCOUNTS ARE BASED ON THESE RUMORS. TO DATE, HOWEVER, NO RELIABLE SOURCE HAS REPORTED ON THE PRESENCE OF ANY CHINESE ADVISORS OR GUERRILLAS ASSISTING AFGHAN INSURGENTS IN ANY PART OF AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING BADAQSHAN.

8. (C) PAK AIR BASES ON ALERT: INDIAN PRESS CLAIMED PAK AIR BASES NEAR AFGHAN BORDER HAD BEEN PLACED ON ALERT. AS PESHAWAR AIR BASE IS ONE OF TWO "FRONT-LINE" BASES, I ASSUME ITS ALERT STATUS WOULD BE RAISED, IF ANY WERE. IN PAST FEW WEEKS, HOWEVER, I HAVE SEEN NO SIGNS OF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY HERE. FOR EXAMPLE, ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, TWICE DEPLOYED LAST YEAR AFTER AFGHAN AIR INCURSIONS, ARE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN TODAY.

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